



News Release

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Water safety: Take precautions to prevent drownings

OLYMPIA — The number is both tragic and predictable. Each year, about 100 people in Washington drown. Sometimes it's a few more, sometimes it's slightly less, but consistently, the annual figure is right around 100.

Many of those deaths are preventable — something to think about as you prepare for Memorial Day weekend, traditionally the start of the summer outdoor activity season in a state where water recreation opportunities abound.

A few simple steps can help keep you and your loved ones safe in and around the water:

- Remember that although air temperatures have warmed up, streams and lakes are still cold, and rivers can be high and swift. Always wear a life jacket that fits when you're on the water, and make sure children do as well.
- Know your limits. Swimming in open water is more demanding than swimming in a pool. Watch out for tricky currents. Be aware that many lakes and rivers have sudden, steep underwater drop-offs.
- Especially if you're not a strong swimmer, swim only in life-guarded areas.
- Don't overload boats, and make sure belongings on board are well-balanced.
- Stay sober. Alcohol and other drugs increase the risk of trouble on and in the water.
- Among children 1 to 4, most drownings occur in home swimming pools. Most of the young drowning victims are out of sight for less than five minutes, long enough for a tragedy to occur. Don't allow young kids in or near pools without an adult, and always keep an eye on them. If a child is missing for even a few seconds, check the pool first.
- Make sure barriers surrounding pools are at least four feet high.
- Know how to swim, and know lifesaving skills such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

Drowning prevention

May 26, 2011

Page 2

Check out more tips for [lakes, rivers and beaches](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/wr/watersafety.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/wr/watersafety.htm) and [home pool safety](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/wr/poolsafety.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/wr/poolsafety.htm) to prevent drowning during the holiday weekend and all season long.

The [Department of Health website](http://www.doh.wa.gov) (www.doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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